

May 19, 2008

**Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste
Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)**

Humboldt County Public Works Department – Old Arcata Road/Myrtle Avenue Widening
and Rehabilitation Project
WDID No. 1B08045WNHU

Humboldt County

On May 19, 2008, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Public Works Department (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to the proposed Old Arcata Road/Myrtle Avenue Road Widening Project near Eureka, Humboldt County. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Rocky Gulch, Cochran Creek, and wetlands in the Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00.

The proposed project is located along a two-lane road that connects the cities of Eureka and Arcata. The proposed project includes road realignment, road and shoulder widening, modification of an existing intersection, and several culvert and drainage improvements along an approximately three mile segment of the road that includes portions of Old Arcata Road and Myrtle Avenue. The existing road in the project area has ten to twelve foot wide travel lanes with minimal shoulder space to allow motorists to make adjustments to emergency situations and for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel adjacent to the vehicle travel lanes. There are several vertical curves on the existing road that do not provide the required sight distances for stopping and two horizontal curves that do not meet minimum radius standards. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists by widening and upgrading the transportation corridor and the roadway geometry to current standards.

The proposed project has been designed to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands. The primary wetland type that will be impacted is roadside ditches. In areas where roadside ditches must be filled to accommodate the road widening, new ditches are proposed where feasible; however, there are some areas where private property constraints along the road alignment preclude impact avoidance or onsite ditch replacement. The proposed project will result in permanent impacts to 2.58 acres of existing wetlands. Compensatory mitigation is required for these permanent wetland impacts.

In anticipation of the unavoidable permanent wetland impacts from this project, the County developed a wetland mitigation bank at the Fay Slough Wildlife Area, located downstream (west) from the project area, in coordination with the Department of Fish and Game. A Letter of Understanding was executed in 1990 in which the County agreed to create new wetlands by removing portions of old dikes and road fills and constructing approximately 500 feet of new dikes for the purpose of water impoundment. This work was performed in 1992. In 2001, the County assessed the results of the wetland creation efforts. The assessment indicated that 10.67 acres of wetlands were created at the site. Two acres were sold to the City of Eureka in 1993,

and 0.73 acres were used as mitigation for a project on Elk River Road in 2002. The current balance of wetland credit in the mitigation bank is 7.94 acres.

The proposed road widening and drainage improvement activities include the installation of new and larger culverts, culvert extensions to accommodate the wider road, and headwalls for erosion protection. Road widening activities will result in an increase in the amount of impervious surface area within the project area. Increasing the amount of impervious surface area in a watershed has the potential to cause an increase in peak runoff volume and flow rate which can lead to channel scour, bank erosion, and flooding. Runoff flow rates for each affected drainage area were calculated for a 100-year recurrence interval using precipitation rates from the National Weather Service Eureka intensity duration frequency curves. The flow calculations for each drainage area indicate that the increase in runoff rates for each drainage area will be negligible. However, in order to filter runoff and minimize potential impacts associated with the increase in impervious surface the proposed project includes reconstruction of the vegetated roadside ditches where feasible, and construction of a 5 to 8-foot wide and 350-foot long vegetated bio-swale along the section of the realigned road that drains to a tributary to Fay Slough.

The proposed project will result in permanent impacts to 2.58 acres of wetlands, and 1,376 square feet (0.03 acre) and 352 linear feet of waters of the state. Compensatory mitigation for the proposed project includes using 2.58 acres of wetland credit in the Fay Slough Wildlife Area wetland mitigation bank. The rationale for the proposed one-to-one mitigation ratio is based on: the presence of higher quality wetlands at the Fay Slough Wetland Mitigation Bank compared to wetlands located within the project area (primarily roadside ditches); the mitigation bank was established by 1997 which provided more than a 10-year period in which these wetlands were established before the mitigation credits will be used for this project; and a majority of the wetland impacts for this project are taking place within the same drainage basin. Proposed mitigation also includes the creation of additional wetlands onsite through reconstruction of the roadside ditches where feasible. Mitigation for the permanent impacts to stream and drainage channels includes implementation of a revegetation plan that includes erosion control planting, riparian planting, and a post-planting maintenance and monitoring program.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under an individual permit (File No. 2000-257310), pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game. On October 23, 2001, Humboldt County approved a Final Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2001052113) for the project in order to comply with CEQA. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document and any proposed changes incorporated into the project or required as a condition of approval to avoid significant effects to the environment. The proposed project activities are scheduled to begin in June 2008 and the project is expected to take two years to complete.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed road widening and drainage improvement activities. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed project including maps and design drawings. The application and Regional Water Board file are available for public review.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all comments submitted in writing and received at this office by mail during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.